UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/50/864
17 January 1996
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Fiftieth session
Agenda item 157

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE AGENCY FOR CULTURAL AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION

Letter dated 20 December 1995 from the representatives of Benin, France and Viet Nam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Bureau of the Group of French-speaking States in New York would be grateful if you would have the enclosed documents, which were adopted at the Sixth Conference of Heads of State and Government of Countries that Use French as a Common Language, circulated as official documents of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation" (see annexes I-IV).

(Signed)	(Signed)	(Signed)
Alain DEJAMMET	René Valéry MONGBÉ	NGO QUANG XUAN
Permanent Representative	Permanent Representative	Chargé d'affaires a.i.
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ANNEX I

Cotonou Declaration

We, the Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December,

Reiterating our attachment to the French-speaking community based on use of the French language and respect for our different cultures, and in order to reaffirm our solidarity,

Realizing that the vitality of our community will depend on the relevance of responses to our peoples' uncertainties and anxieties and on our ability to turn the French-speaking world into an area of co-development,

Pay tribute once again to the historic role of the United Nations by confirming our support for the Declaration on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations;

Agree to make full use of all regional mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes and to help strengthen the preventive diplomacy endorsed by the United Nations, including in the French-speaking world;

Reaffirm our faith in democratic values based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in full respect for the rights of minorities;

Reaffirm further our profound determination to reduce the ranks of the poor and excluded by means of an increasingly active and concrete solidarity and real involvement of civil society, particularly women, in the development process;

Emphasize once again that the rule of law, democracy, development, security and peace are necessarily interrelated;

Condemn terrorism in all its forms, any attempt to challenge the democratization process, to destabilize legally constituted regimes and any occupation of territory by force;

Resolve to make the French-speaking world more dynamic and forward-looking, by giving new impetus to education and by strengthening our activities for youth;

Emphasize our renewed determination to strengthen the French-speaking world as an instrument for dialogue and multilateral cooperation by giving it legal, material and human resources commensurate with its political ambition, inter alia, by establishing a general secretariat for the French-speaking community;

Decide to act resolutely to correct imbalances in economic and cultural exchanges, with a view to achieving equitable partnership and real solidarity, and to pursue efforts at economic integration with a view to achieving harmonious and lasting development;

Undertake to develop a prominent role for the French-speaking world in the area of new information and communication technologies;

Declare our firm determination to extend the influence of the French-speaking community throughout the world and to work to achieve the legitimate aspirations of our peoples.

ANNEX II

Resolutions

RESOLUTION ON THE FRENCH-SPEAKING WORLD AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Recalling resolution 7 of the Chaillot summit conference and resolution 12 of the Mauritius summit conference, on the use of French in global and regional international organizations, and resolution 11, on the French-speaking world and international relations, adopted at the Mauritius conference,

Welcoming the fruitful working relationship established with the United Nations and the participation of the French-speaking world in the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and in the summit meetings and global conferences held in 1994 and 1995,

Emphasizing their desire to continue to collaborate in enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations,

Guided by the need for the French-speaking community to work together on a regular basis, both within international organizations and at large international meetings,

Noting with satisfaction the opening of a liaison office of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation at the United Nations in New York similar to those already opened in Geneva and Brussels,

Bearing in mind the asset which the presence of international organizations on French-speaking territory constitutes for the French-speaking world,

Welcoming the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly on 3 November 1995 of resolution 50/11, on multilingualism,

Distressed nevertheless by the underuse of the French language in some organizations of the United Nations system, despite the fact that French is one of their official or working languages,

Observing that the principle of the equality of the official languages is increasingly called into question by the holding of "reduced cost", informal meetings,

Deem it essential that the recruitment and training of French-speaking international civil servants be encouraged by all appropriate means, in order to ensure that they are properly represented in international organizations;

Invite civil servants who are nationals of their countries to ensure that the status of the French language is strictly respected in international

organizations, including peace-keeping operations, principally by making certain that the expenses of translation and interpretation into the French language are taken into account when budgets are adopted;

Underline also the importance they attach to the simultaneous distribution in good time of documentation, in both paper and electronic form, in the official languages of the organizations;

Reiterate their recommendations made at the Mauritius and Chaillot summit conferences regarding the preservation of French, an Olympian language;

Decide to work to ensure that the international organizations which have their headquarters in French-speaking territory remain there and that other organizations locate themselves there;

Decide also to intensify the collective efforts and participation of the French-speaking community in international organizations and conferences, particularly at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II) and the World Food Summit;

Welcome the unanimous adoption by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 October 1995 of resolution 50/3, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation, which is intended to promote cooperation between the two secretariats and requests the specialized agencies and other bodies and programmes of the United Nations to cooperate to this end;

Urgently call for the question of the status of the New York office to be settled by agreement with the authorities of the host country;

Desire that the French-speaking world should have permanent observer status in the bodies responsible for implementing the convention between the African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Union;

Give the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation a mandate to negotiate financing with the European Union on behalf of French-speaking States and Governments;

Mandate the Permanent Council of French-speaking Countries, with the assistance of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation, to take all necessary steps for the implementation of this resolution.

RESOLUTION ON CONFLICT PREVENTION, PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Recalling resolution 1 of the Mauritius summit conference, on the maintenance of international peace and security, and their desire to strengthen the capacity of the Organization of African Unity to take preventive action,

Reaffirming the common political will expressed by them in the Declaration of the Dakar summit conference to strive for the establishment of a stable and lasting world peace,

Convinced that sustainable and balanced economic development is inseparable from peace and respect for human rights,

Noting the significant progress made in the resolution of a number of conflicts in the world but also the serious disturbances and mounting dangers experienced by some States, particularly in Africa,

Considering that the French-speaking countries should play a more prominent world role in bringing about the advent of lasting peace by making a greater contribution to the dissemination of a culture of tolerance and peace,

Aware of the capacity of their countries to make a special contribution to initiatives already under way at the international, regional or national levels for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts,

Express their support for the role of regional organizations and agreements in the maintenance of international peace and security and stress the importance of coordinating their efforts with those of the United Nations;

Welcome the creation by the Organization of African Unity of a mechanism for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa;

Declare their desire to strengthen the French-speaking community through concerted action, while respecting the sovereignty of member States, to prevent conflicts, alleviate tensions and ensure a peaceful outcome to such crises as arise;

Decide to strengthen the French-speaking world's capacity to react by instituting speedy consultation among their political authorities with a view to determining, when necessary, what measures are to be taken.

RESOLUTION ON SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIZATION, THE RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Recalling their active and steadfast commitment to democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights as the guarantors of economic development and social progress,

Considering that democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights can never be taken for granted and that their effective implementation calls for sustained effort,

Recognizing the important role that can be played by government and by a public administration that is efficient, competent and accountable to citizens in strengthening the rule of law and in achieving sustainable development,

Reaffirm that an independent, accessible and effectual judicial system is the primary guarantee of the rule of law;

Confirm their commitment to making the French-speaking world an abode of solidarity and the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, to strengthening through their joint commitment the extension of the rule of law, and to uniting the democratic ideal with the aspiration to development;

Reiterate their support for appropriate institutions and mechanisms for promoting democracy, protecting the rule of law and ensuring respect for human rights at the national, regional and international levels;

Decide, in order to promote the ongoing democratization process in the French-speaking world, to maintain their level of support for the holding of electoral consultations, where necessary, while diversifying the kinds of assistance they offer so as to adapt it to the particular context in each country;

Request the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation, in liaison with the Assemblée internationale des parlementaires de langue française (International Assembly of French-speaking Parliamentarians), to promote enhanced inter-parliamentary cooperation, especially for the benefit of the parliaments of the South;

Undertake to contribute actively, in the spirit of the Cotonou Initiative adopted by the Conference of African Ministers of the Civil Service in November 1991, to the examination of the question of public administration and development, the exchange of experiences and the elaboration of the necessary recommendations at the resumed fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly in March-April 1996;

Undertake also to ratify and give effect to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to promote the full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life through the exercise of their rights, with a view to their full empowerment as citizens of States in which the rule of law prevails;

Call for the universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and for its effective implementation;

Decide to combat evils that affect children, such as the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography as well as the involvement of children, as victims but also as combatants, in armed conflicts;

Undertake to renew their efforts for the ratification of all United Nations human rights conventions.

RESOLUTION ON JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Considering the holding at Cairo, from 30 October to 1 November 1995, of the Third Conference of French-speaking Ministers of Justice, pursuant to resolution 18 of the Mauritius summit conference,

Referring to the conclusions of the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders,

Recalling the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna in 1993,

Affirming that justice is the guarantor of respect for individual freedoms and is also an essential aspect of development,

Concerned at the growing transnational nature of crime and the harm done by endemic corruption to investments in development,

Guided by the Cairo Declaration,

Proclaim the decade 1995-2005 the Decade for Justice in the French-speaking World;

Reaffirm that the security of persons and property is one of the preconditions of economic development and that legal security in trade and investment is also an essential condition of such development;

Agree that there is a need to create the required conditions for the administration of justice in a way that is conducive to development;

Confirm, accordingly, that in so far as economic development implies increasingly transnational legal relations, there is a need to:

Bring laws into line with the new situations that have resulted from the modernization of economic relations;

Provide particular support to ministries of justice for this purpose within the context of fruitful cooperation among French-speaking countries;

Promote the formation of a judiciary that specializes in economics and finance, in order to enforce the relevant legislation;

Encourage the twinning of jurisdictions;

Emphasize the growing importance of arbitration in the development of international trade;

Agree to take all necessary steps to enable the States of the French-speaking world to acquire a thorough knowledge of the legal provisions that will ensure their active presence in the World Trade Organization;

Support the steps being taken to strengthen efforts to bring business law into line with labour law, with a view to promoting regional economic integration and the progressive formation of an economic community for the French-speaking world;

Decide to combine their efforts to establish effective legal and judicial cooperation in the prevention of crime, especially transnational and organized crime, and the strengthening of criminal justice systems by developing and promoting international instruments pertaining to criminal justice, such as agreements concerning trafficking in women and children, genocide, war crimes, terrorism and drug-related offences.

RESOLUTION ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE CAIRO CONFERENCE

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Recalling resolution 18, adopted by the Mauritius summit conference, on the holding of a third conference of ministers of justice, with a view to identifying means of combining law with development and establishing the rule of law,

Welcoming the holding of this conference at Cairo from 30 October to 1 November 1995, together with the commitments made by the ministers of justice of the countries of the French-speaking world,

Convinced of the relevance of programmes undertaken at the multilateral level by French-speaking countries to develop legal and judicial cooperation, and of the efforts to promote interparliamentary cooperation,

Decide to endorse the conclusions and recommendations of the Cairo Conference, as set forth in the declaration adopted by the Conference, in support of: the independence of the judiciary; an effective form of justice as a guarantor of the rule of law; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and justice as a factor in development;

Adopt the plan of action resulting from this Conference and pledge themselves to support its full implementation;

Declare their willingness to promote the necessary legal and judicial reforms, in particular those provided for in comprehensive plans;

Intend to encourage a substantial increase in the volume of credits allocated for initiatives of French-speaking countries relating to legal and judicial cooperation at both the bilateral and multilateral levels;

Desire to mobilize their Governments to respond to the pressing expectations of their peoples in all areas and to ask them to propose to national parliaments that legislative and budgetary measures corresponding to the above-mentioned approaches be adopted;

Support the efforts needed to ensure that the required budgetary resources are allocated to the justice system with a view to strengthening the rule of law, democracy, protection of human rights and social peace;

Support the Cairo Initiative, which entrusts the ministers of countries comprising the officers of the Conference the task of following up the implementation of the final declaration of that Conference.

RESOLUTION ON AFRICA

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Reaffirming the conviction expressed at previous summit conferences that democracy, development and security are necessarily linked,

Noting with satisfaction the progress made in Africa in the area of democratization and the rule of law,

Concerned at the fragility of the democratization process in certain areas and at the efforts to derail it,

Observing that coordinated, courageous and converging efforts at economic recovery have been made which will enable several countries to return to the international financial community,

Welcoming the continued reduction of areas of tension in Africa, the establishment of a non-racial democratic regime in South Africa, the return of peace to Angola and Mozambique and the beginning of national reconciliation in Liberia,

Deploring the tragic events that have taken place recently in some African States, such as Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and Liberia, which have entailed significant loss of human life and material damage as well as massive displacements of the population,

Aware of the many difficulties still facing African countries,

Encourage the African countries to pursue their efforts aimed at consolidating democracy and the rule of law, improving their economic and social situation and achieving regional integration through the integration process provided for in the Abuja Treaty, and at preventing conflicts;

Continue to support all these efforts;

Appeal to international cooperation and financial agencies to take the progress achieved in all these areas into account in their activities in Africa;

Request that all measures be taken to ensure the return, resettlement and reintegration of refugees and displaced or dispersed persons;

Undertake to work in the international arena to secure increased development assistance for Africa, particularly within the framework of a new partnership;

Undertake also to work for a more equitable international economic order and for the reduction of the burden which external debt places on the economies of African countries.

RESOLUTION ON RWANDA

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Considering the consequences of the genocide and the massacres perpetrated in Rwanda,

Concerned by the threat of the eruption of new conflicts in the subregion, owing to the presence of 2 million refugees and the acts of violence committed against them,

Convinced that the restoration of peace and stability must include the repatriation of refugees, the rejection of impunity and national reconciliation in general,

Considering that the reconstruction needs of the country are immense and that economic development is also a condition for genuine reconciliation,

Bearing in mind the commitments made at the round-table meeting in Geneva in January 1995 and at the mid-term review at Kigali in July 1995,

Recognizing the efforts of the international community, particularly the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the countries of the Great Lakes region, to achieve a lasting peace,

Believing that multilateral cooperation between French-speaking countries has a role to play in resolving the crisis in Rwanda,

Recalling the efforts made to this end in Rwanda by the French-speaking community, particularly the evaluation mission undertaken by the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation in November 1994 with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme, its participation in the round-table meeting at Geneva in January 1995 and the organization of an informal meeting of donors in February 1995, as well as the initiative of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation aimed at rehabilitating the Rwandan education system,

Encourage all initiatives aimed at ensuring the voluntary and concerted return of Rwandan refugees and support the efforts made by the international community to ensure peace, security and development in the subregion, particularly the holding of an international conference on the political

stability, security and development of the Great Lakes region under the auspices* of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, while respecting the sovereignty of States;

Appeal urgently for the decisions taken at the Nairobi and Bujumbura conferences and the commitments made at Geneva to be honoured;

Call upon the agents of the French-speaking world, particularly the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation, to increase their activities on behalf of Rwanda, especially in the area of support for the rule of law and the protection of human rights;

Request that the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation provide the French-speaking countries with whatever legal assistance they may require in order to facilitate in their territory the mission of the International Tribunal responsible for bringing to justice the persons presumed responsible for acts of genocide and other serious human rights violations committed in Rwanda and the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 978 (1995).

RESOLUTION ON BURUNDI

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Concerned about the serious difficulties of every kind afflicting Burundi,

Concerned also about the acts of violence perpetrated against a large number of exiled, displaced or dispersed persons, and the serious threat such acts pose to peace and security in the subregion,

Recalling the declaration on the situation in Burundi of the Ministerial Conference of French-speaking Countries held in Paris on 30 March 1995, the French-speaking peacemaking mission of April 1995, and the identification mission of May 1995,

Welcoming the ongoing efforts at mediation of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU),

Encourage the Government of Burundi to continue its efforts in the context of the Convention of Government aimed at the prompt re-establishment of peace and security throughout the national territory;

Welcome the dispatch to Burundi of the international commission of judicial inquiry established by the United Nations;

Appeal urgently for tolerance, reconciliation among the different elements of Burundian society and the strengthening of democratic values;

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* Reservation by Rwanda.

Request the international community in general and Burundi's neighbours, in particular those countries which have sheltered Burundian refugees, to contribute actively to the re-establishment of peace and security in Burundi and to the voluntary and orderly repatriation of Burundian refugees;

Support the holding, under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, of an international conference to promote political stability, security and development while respecting the sovereignty of States;

Call upon the agents of the French-speaking world, in particular the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation, to increase their efforts to assist Burundi, particularly in the rehabilitation of justice and the promotion of human rights;

Reaffirm their willingness, within the context of multilateral cooperation between French-speaking countries, to contribute to the search for lasting solutions to Burundi's problems and the strengthening of the rule of law in that country;

Invite the heads of official bodies in the French-speaking world to stand ready, should the need arise, to organize new missions or activities to assist that country.

RESOLUTION ON LEBANON

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Recalling the resolutions of previous summit conferences which reaffirm their solidarity with and support for Lebanon,

Welcoming the commendable progress made in the country's economic and social situation and the sustained efforts of the Lebanese Government to re-establish the rule of law throughout the national territory, which facilitate the implementation of the cooperation projects already approved for Lebanon,

Invite the international community to ensure full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), with a view to restoring the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon and achieving a just and lasting peace in the region;

Decide to integrate into the general programming the projects initiated within the framework of the Solidarity Fund for Lebanon created by the Quebec summit conference, in order to contribute to the reconstruction of the cultural, educational, technical and medical institutions, and to continue their work for Lebanon.

RESOLUTION ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Recalling the involvement of the French-speaking world in the proceedings of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Beijing in September 1995,

Guided by the declaration adopted at the Fourth Ministerial Conference of French-speaking Countries, held at Ouagadougou in December 1994, on the commitment of the French-speaking world to women, which confirmed the course marked out at the preparatory meetings at Nouakchott and Dakar, and recommended the formulation, after Beijing, of objectives for a strategy for assistance by the French-speaking world to women,

Noting the consensus reached at the Beijing Conference on the need to integrate gender issues fully into the mainstream of public policy and on the affirmation of the essential equality between men and women in all areas,

Concurring with the priorities identified during the meeting of ministers and heads of French-speaking delegations in Beijing, namely:

Full exercise by women of their rights;

Education and instruction, which determine equal rights through access to knowledge;

Creation of a true and equal partnership between men and women in political, economic and social development;

Involvement of women, both as participants and as beneficiaries, in development projects and initiatives, at all levels and from the initial stages, in order to enhance their effectiveness;

Empowering women to become real actors in the political and economic spheres and to achieve full participation, on an equal footing with men, in government and decision-making bodies;

Pledge to promote these priority objectives in their respective countries with a view to achieving them fully;

Mandate the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation to integrate gender issues in all its programmes, from their conception, and to contribute to the drawing-up of national plans, and mandate the official bodies of the French-speaking world to hold a meeting during the first half of 1997 on follow-up to the Beijing Conference.

RESOLUTION ON THE EMERGENCY FUND OF THE
FRENCH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Recalling the creation, at the Quebec Summit, of a fund to encourage acts of solidarity to support reconstruction and development in French-speaking countries experiencing particular difficulties, as well as resolutions 11 and 14 of the Dakar and Chaillot summit conferences, respectively, on continuation of the fund,

Bearing in mind the recommendation of the Quebec summit conference that these initiatives, of several years' duration, should be carried out within the framework of regular cooperation programmes, rather than that of the solidarity fund,

Noting that the French-speaking community must make a special, urgent response to emergency situations associated not only with natural disasters (tropical storms, drought, volcanic eruptions and so forth), but also with the devastation wreaked by major political disturbances,

Regretting in particular the problems encountered in implementing the resolutions on Rwanda and Burundi because of the impossibility of raising the necessary funds in the time available,

Decide to replace the existing solidarity fund with an "Emergency Fund" for the mobilization of resources to be used specifically to respond to emergency situations arising as a result of natural disasters or major political disturbances;

Recommend that the implementation of these initiatives by the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation be approved by the Permanent Council of French-speaking Countries.

RESOLUTION ON ECONOMIC COOPERATION

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Convinced that the multilateral economic institutions continue to be key instruments of the international development strategy,

Concerned at the persistence of the international economic crisis, particularly in the developing countries and, especially, in Africa,

Conscious of the close link between democracy and economic development,

Note with satisfaction that there is a correlation between the resources invested to promote the rule of law and the espousal by the countries of the South of democratic values, while regretting that the resources committed by the

French-speaking world to aid economic recovery have fallen short of expectations;

Strongly reaffirm their determination to make the economy a major area of cooperation among the French-speaking countries so that progress made in the democratization process is not undermined by poverty;

Recommend that the various agents should bear in mind the principles set out at the Chaillot summit conference concerning the priority to be accorded to the South, and reaffirm the thrust of their efforts outlined in resolutions 15 and 20 of the Mauritius summit conference, including mobilization of savings, promotion of private enterprise and development of partnerships, and restructuring and regional integration of the countries of the South, with special emphasis on sustainable development objectives;

Desire that the possibility of organizing an economic community of French-speaking countries be considered.

RESOLUTION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Recalling that the French-speaking world is an area of cooperation and solidarity,

Dedicated to a shared objective of sustainable development which generates employment, promotes social equity, places the human being at the centre of development and respects the environment,

Noting the changes in the international economy and the prospects for growth introduced by the liberalization of trade and the development of private investment,

Noting with concern that developing countries draw unequal benefit from this intensification of international trade, and seeking to avoid the marginalization of some of them,

Concerned by the persistence of extreme poverty and malnutrition and by the adverse social consequences of economic structural adjustment,

Acknowledging the concerns frequently expressed by developing countries with regard to development assistance,

Convinced that the responsibility for development rests primarily with the States concerned,

Further convinced that substantial flows of public funds remain necessary, in the context of international cooperation for development, to assist peoples who lack sufficient financial resources to sustain growth, particularly in the poorest and most indebted countries,

Seeking to increase the effectiveness of international assistance in accordance, inter alia, with the relevant guidelines adopted at the summit meetings of the Group of Seven at Naples and Halifax,

Call upon the multilateral development institutions and other donors to concentrate their assistance on poverty reduction, with priority accorded to the needs of the poorest countries;

Request the United Nations agencies and international financial institutions to work together in the pursuit of development objectives;

Also request the United Nations agencies to take steps to coordinate their activities more effectively;

Invite the community of donor States to continue to provide official development assistance commensurate with their economic and financial capacities;

Emphasize the need to devote a sufficient volume of resources on favourable terms to development assistance;

Also invite developing countries with rapidly growing economies to engage in South-South cooperation in order that other developing countries may benefit from their experience;

Undertake to identify and promote the reforms required to enhance the effectiveness of international development assistance.

RESOLUTION ON THE STRENGTHENING OF MULTILATERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONS

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Recalling the conclusions of the Rio Conference concerning the importance of sustainable development,

Convinced that the multilateral economic institutions continue to be key instruments of the international development strategy,

Also convinced that the responsibility for development rests primarily with States,

Concerned by the persistence of extreme poverty and by the marginalization of the poorest countries,

Further concerned by the social tensions arising from economic structural adjustment,

Seeking to make their contribution to economic development on the basis of dialogue between the different participants in the economic process, including democratic and representative trade unions,

Encouraged by the recent efforts of the international community, including the initiatives put forward by the Group of Seven at its summit meeting at Halifax to enhance the effectiveness of the Bretton Woods economic institutions and the United Nations development assistance agencies,

Invite the members of the international community, including the countries members of the Group of Seven, with particular reference to their summit meeting at Lyon, to maintain the dialogue aimed at strengthening the multilateral economic development institutions;

Call upon the multilateral economic development institutions to allocate their resources to basic social programmes as a matter of priority, to promote the development of a dynamic private sector and to grant resources on concessional terms to those of the poorest countries which have demonstrated their determination and capacity to use such resources effectively;

Undertake to support all measures designed to strengthen the multilateral economic development institutions in order that they may properly fulfil their mandate.

RESOLUTION ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Conscious of the challenge posed by the very swift development of the information society and of the economic, technological and cultural implications thereof,

Convinced of the need for the French-speaking world to be involved in development of the information highway, in order to protect and promote the development of all the languages and cultures that form the common heritage of mankind,

Recalling that the objective is to mobilize human and technological resources in the French-speaking world in order that such scientific developments may help to improve the lives of all, and particularly of the most disadvantaged,

Bearing in mind the conclusions adopted by the European Council at Corfu on 24 and 25 June 1994 on the importance of the linguistic and cultural aspects of the information society,

Referring to the proposals concerning the information society by the Chair of the Ministerial Conference of the Group of Seven, held at Brussels on 25 and 26 February 1995, which call, inter alia, for an information society at the

service of citizens and stress the importance of promoting cultural enrichment through diversity of content and open access to the networks,

Intend to ensure that a dynamic French-speaking world occupies its rightful place on the electronic networks, while respecting cultural diversity and motivated by a spirit of cooperation with other groups;

Emphasize the strategic importance of interconnection between all the networks of the North and of the South, as well as with the global networks of the information society, and of access to such networks in order to increase the use of French-language services;

Accordingly, call upon the French-speaking countries of the South to strengthen and modernize their telecommunication networks;

Stress the urgent need to develop content by encouraging, inter alia, the creation of French-language servers, the computer processing of language to allow the digitalization of diacritical marks and the use of applications for education and technical, professional and scientific information, as well as by facilitating the creation of databases for the countries of the South;

Agree to facilitate circulation of the French language on the networks by producing French versions of browser software and developing browsers linking French to other languages, while heightening awareness of the need for linguistic diversity on the networks;

Will strive to adapt rules and regulations to the requirements of linguistic and cultural diversity;

Will ensure the complementarity of national, bilateral and multilateral efforts to develop the presence of French on the information highways;

Call for such efforts to focus, as a matter of priority, on: establishing servers from the South; training human resources to develop and use servers and sites; standardizing communication protocols; creating "windows" for countries of the South; and developing content in French;

Call upon the industrialized French-speaking countries to involve the countries of the South in creative work and scientific production by facilitating the transfer of know-how and technology to such countries, in order that their human resources may develop their potential and make their contribution to the joint campaign undertaken in this sphere by the French-speaking world;

Decide to this end to hold a conference of the competent ministers at the earliest opportunity.

RESOLUTION ON THE PRIORITY TO BE GRANTED TO BASIC EDUCATION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF COUNTRIES THAT USE FRENCH AS A COMMON LANGUAGE

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Recalling the resolution adopted at the 1993 Mauritius summit conference on reorientation of the Conference of Ministers of Education of Countries that Use French as a Common Language, which seeks to strengthen the political role of the Conference by enabling it, on the one hand, to help formulate and evaluate educational policies in member States and, on the other hand, to guide and define the broad parameters of all programmes relating to education and training submitted to the summit conferences for approval,

Welcoming the conclusions of the forty-sixth session of the Conference, held at Yaoundé in 1994, and especially the declaration on basic education, which recommends the implementation of the following priority programmes:

Democratization and decentralization of education through, inter alia, the development of a dynamic educational partnership;

School financing, expansion of infrastructures and coordination of assistance;

Improvement of school administration and strengthening of institutional capacities;

Educational planning and evaluation;

Education of the girl-child;

Redefinition of the purposes of schooling and curriculum reform;

Production of teaching materials and textbooks;

Motivation, training and supervision of personnel,

Reiterate their desire to expand the Conference to include all States and Governments of the French-speaking world;

Note that, as far as education systems are concerned, basic education is the only appropriate way of meeting fundamental educational needs and enabling every individual to become a real participant in society and an effective and responsible participant in the economic, social and cultural development of his or her country;

Decide to place basic education at the core of their concerns and actions, with a view to restructuring existing education systems;

Request the institutions of the French-speaking world and international organizations to coordinate their efforts to this end.

RESOLUTION ON THE ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES MAIRES ET RESPONSABLES DES CAPITALES ET MÉTROPOLES PARTIELLEMENT OU ENTIÈREMENT FRANCOPHONES

The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language, meeting at Cotonou from 2 to 4 December 1995,

Recalling resolution 6 of the Mauritius summit conference, which recognized the unique nature of the Association internationale des maires et responsables des capitales et métropoles partiellement ou entièrement francophones (International Association of Mayors and Others Responsible for Partially or Entirely French-speaking Capital Cities or Metropolises), composed of locally elected political officials,

Referring to resolution 11 of the Chaillot summit conference, on simplification and consolidation of the institutions of the French-speaking world,

Considering the growing participation of the Association in the determination of development policies in French-speaking municipalities,

Emphasizing, in particular, the activities of the Association in support of democratization,

Decide to recognize the Association internationale des maires et responsables des capitales et métropoles partiellement ou entièrement francophones as a direct participant in summit conferences;

Request the Permanent Council of French-speaking Countries to monitor the implementation of this decision.

ANNEX III

Thoughts on the international political situation

1. General approach

The Cotonou summit conference was held in 1995, thus coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Agency for Cultural and Technical Cooperation (ACTC). The Heads of State and Government of the countries that use French as a common language commended the vital role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and in the economic and social fields. They stressed the need to support efforts aimed at enhancing the coordination and coherence of the Organization's work in pursuit of its objectives. In this context, the Heads of State and Government of countries that use French as a common language considered ways and means of strengthening solidarity in the French-speaking world and helping to enhance the effectiveness of action by the international community.

It was noted in the discussions that the French-speaking world cannot by itself tackle all the major problems and challenges facing the world at the dawn of the twenty-first century. The high stakes involved both in the economic and social development of countries and in the prevention and settlement of conflicts are the concern of all countries, whether they are members of the French-speaking world or not.

The Heads of State and Government welcomed the progress made by the French-speaking community, which had set itself specific and well-targeted rallying objectives. With a view to promoting the visibility, performance and collective impact of the French-speaking world, the Heads of State and Government reiterated the importance of the use of French as the linchpin and foundation of their joint undertakings. They stressed that the French-speaking world must facilitate the transmission, in French, of knowledge and technology, while promoting better mutual understanding.

The participants expressed the wish that the countries of the French-speaking world should continue to work together to promote their own growth through a dialogue of cultures and differences in a world that is more dependent on technology than ever before and is all too often forced to accept linguistic uniformity. The Heads of State and Government stressed that the French-speaking world must adapt to the modern-day intermingling of cultures resulting as much from population movements as from the new accessibility of communications in all forms. In this context, the French-speaking world must promote regional exchanges in the area of communications in order to participate in the vitally important information highway revolution.

The participants expressed satisfaction that the French-speaking world is avoiding the temptation to close itself off on the basis of strictly linguistic considerations. They noted that the French-speaking world has progressively staked out a place for itself in major international conferences with the objective of making a special contribution to the progress of mankind.

2. The international situation

The international situation is characterized by an increase in national conflicts, the resurgence of nationalist extremism and the resumption of border conflicts which had been suppressed for decades, all of which are of deep concern to observers of the international scene. At the end of 1995, numerous sources of tension persist and are spreading. Six years after the fall of the Berlin wall, the Heads of State and Government reassessed the new international order.

Europe

All the participants noted that the time has never been so auspicious for the establishment of a democratic peace throughout Europe. The building of Europe is progressing and the European Union is continuing its policy of openness to the East, as demonstrated by the various agreements reached with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has launched its "partnership for peace" programme with a view to increasing security and stability in Europe.

The situation in Russia, particularly in the Chechen Republic, is a matter of concern for the entire French-speaking world. The French-speaking States welcome the cease-fire agreement in the Chechen Republic and hope that the resumption of dialogue will lead to a lasting political solution. The French-speaking countries recognized that the problems of security and instability in several regions of the former Soviet Union are acute and urged recourse to international institutions, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

With regard to the tragedy of the former Yugoslavia, the Heads of State and Government welcomed the progress made and call on the parties to take the necessary steps to ensure that the agreements which have recently been initialled lead to a lasting peace.

Asia and the Pacific

The Heads of State and Government welcomed the consolidation of the Asia-Pacific region and the expansion of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The admission of Viet Nam to ASEAN is an example of enlightened economic integration in the major international circuits. They noted with interest the participation of China in the formulation of solutions to political, economic and commercial problems in Asia. They all expressed the hope that the transfer of Hong Kong to China in 1997 would proceed in accordance with the agreements concluded. They are in agreement that the full integration of China into the Asia-Pacific region will be one of the major challenges of the years to come.

The risks of conflict in Kashmir continue to be a source of concern to the international community in view of the importance of the parties involved. These parties were urged to seek a peaceful settlement which would make it possible to reduce tension and increase security in the overpopulated Indian subcontinent.

The Heads of State and Government expressed regret that the civil war continues in Sri Lanka and voiced the hope that peace would be established there.

The Middle East and Africa

In the Middle East, the peace process is continuing and must be encouraged. The Heads of State and Government condemn the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and hope that this act will not impede the continuation of the peace process. They note with satisfaction the signing in Washington, D.C., on 28 September 1995 by the Israelis and Palestinians of the Taba Agreement, which paves the way for final negotiations. They hope that the resumption of Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian negotiations and the resolve of all the parties involved in the Middle East will lead to a global, just and lasting peace in the region.

The Heads of State and Government express their support for the Lebanese Government in its efforts for national reconstruction. They declare themselves in favour of the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) with a view to restoring the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon.

In sub-Sahara Africa, the genocide and massacres in Rwanda are one of the worst tragedies of the century. The extremist genocidal elements must be neutralized and brought before the International Tribunal for Rwanda, which held its first plenary meeting on 26 June 1995. The Heads of State and Government stressed the need to learn from the lessons of the Rwandan tragedy so that similar mass killings would not occur. In the wake of the displacement of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Rwanda and Burundi to neighbouring countries, particularly Zaire, the Heads of State and Government believe that an overall solution must be found for the Great Lakes region. They recommend that after an assessment of the implementation of the resolutions adopted at the regional and international conferences at Nairobi, Bujumbura and Cairo, an international conference on the political stability, security and development of the region should be held under the auspices* of the United Nations and OAU, while respecting State sovereignty, and appeal to the Rwandan people to continue to support this momentum for peace.

Since the Mauritius summit conference, many other civil conflicts within States (including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the Sudan) have weakened Africa and slowed its development, causing the flight of millions of refugees and untold damage. The French-speaking world, over half of whose members are African, has a special responsibility in preventing such conflicts, which are disasters in human as well as economic and social terms. The attack on the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros during the night of 27/28 September 1995 concerns the international community as a whole and the French-speaking community in particular, and underscores the need for greater vigilance.

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* Reservation by Rwanda.

The Heads of State and Government appeal to the Nigerian authorities to promote the establishment of the rule of law and democracy.

On a more positive note, the Heads of State and Government welcome the democratic transfer of power in South Africa. They welcome the peace agreements signed in Angola, Liberia and Mozambique. They further welcome the return of peace to the northern part of the Sahel and support its consolidation. These good news show that there is cause for some optimism with regard to Africa's long-term prospects, although much remains to be done in the areas of conflict prevention and improving the well-being of the people. They also welcomed the increase in the number of democratic elections held in the French-speaking world over the past two years and the subsequent general consolidation of the rule of law.

The Americas

The latest Summit of the Americas in Miami has strengthened the spirit of cooperation between the two American hemispheres in the economic and political fields; this is bound to promote democracy and development in many South American and Caribbean States. The recent legislative elections in Haiti were an unqualified success, testifying to the consolidation of democracy in that country.

3. Spheres of activity

Conflict prevention

It is important that the French-speaking world play a role in conflict prevention and that it devise mechanisms that will allow it to use its considerable weight, given the number and importance of French-speaking States, in international organizations. At a meeting of French-speaking countries on conflict prevention, held in Ottawa in September 1995, a number of guiding principles were identified which could serve as a basis for conflict-prevention efforts.

Rapid response to conflicts

The Heads of State and Government took note of the proposals put forward by various bodies with a view to enhancing the rapid intervention capability of the United Nations in peace-keeping operations. In that regard, the Prime Minister of Canada took advantage of the Conference to present a report constituting Canada's special contribution to the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

Towards sound political, economic and social management of the State

The Heads of State and Government considered key issues relating to the problems of sustainable economic development, economic growth, debt and trade, population growth and massive population movements.

At Cotonou, the French-speaking community made a commitment to promote human-centred sustainable development that emphasizes poverty elimination with a view to integrating the poorest countries into the world economy. The

French-speaking countries want to act as a catalyst that will mobilize the international community to produce substantial outcomes.

The French-speaking world must promote its ideas regarding solidarity and consolidation of the rule of law. The Heads of State and Government agree to continue to promote human rights, the development of democracy and rigorous management of the State. They will continue their efforts to ensure the participation of the population as a whole in the exercise of power without discrimination.

The French-speaking States have demonstrated that they accept democratic criticism and that they are participating in the consolidation of democracy by fostering a dialogue with civil society, including non-governmental associations and organizations. The Heads of State and Government shall endeavour to conclude regional agreements to reduce Governments' arms requirements. They will use the resulting savings for the development of their human and natural resources in order to ensure sustainable and balanced economic growth.

Arms control and disarmament

The Heads of State and Government, who stand ready actively to promote the signing in September 1996 of a comprehensive test-ban treaty, welcomed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Heads of State urged leaders of nuclear-threshold countries to agree to the effective monitoring of their weapons and those of non-signatory countries to become parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. They also welcomed the adoption by the United Nations at its fiftieth session of the Treaty declaring Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone, pursuant to the resolutions adopted by the Organization of African Unity at Addis Ababa in June 1995, and invited the international community to take all the necessary steps for the entry into force of that Treaty. They requested all countries to refrain from taking any initiatives that might heighten regional tensions. They deplored the continuing world-wide imbalance between spending on weapons and spending on development.

The Heads of State and Government continue to be deeply concerned about the vast quantities of conventional weapons in circulation. According to the United Nations, over 90 per cent of the victims of intra-State conflicts are civilians. Unless the proliferation of weapons, including light weapons and anti-personnel mines, is stopped, civilians will continue to be the victims of war. The Heads of State and Government agreed that the international community and Governments must work together in order to reduce the use of weapons. Specifically, participants in the summit conference undertook to support de-mining efforts in the French-speaking world.

Lastly, refugees constitute one of the most serious problems in the world: in Africa alone, 22 French-speaking countries took in over 3.5 million refugees and displaced persons last year. Yet there are no real prospects for a lasting solution, and the institution of asylum may thus be at serious risk. Consequently, the scope and complexity of the refugee problem in Africa and elsewhere call for innovative and bold strategies.

ANNEX IV

Thoughts on the world economic situation

Since the Mauritius summit conference, globalization of the economy and the strengthening of links between political and economic factors have continued. Globalization has been accompanied by increased regional economic integration, reflected in the signing of the Uruguay Round, the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty and of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Abuja Treaty, as well as the expansion of the European Union to 15 members, of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to seven members, and of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to 12 members. The end of the recession and the establishment of the World Trade Organization have also favoured the globalization of trade and had an impact on world-wide economic relations. In this period of global economic integration, the French-speaking world must act as a focus for concertation and cooperation among its members so that they can better tackle the many challenges facing them.

1. Recent developments in the world economic situation

In 1994-1995, the world economy began a new cycle of growth which was more widespread than in previous years. Growth rates reached 3 per cent in the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), leading to increased inflationary pressures relative to the exceptionally low inflation rates of recent years. Despite the recovery, there is still considerable structural unemployment in many countries, requiring adjustment of policies and regulation of investments and the labour market. The budgetary situation of several countries will have to be improved in order to maintain growth, promote investment and employment, and reduce the danger of volatility on financial and money markets. Such risks mean that countries seeking to attract capital must gain the confidence of investors, who often view the countries of the South with excessive caution.

Although several economies in transition continue to experience serious problems of economic instability, economic recovery has taken place there, too, particularly in those countries which are implementing stringent reforms. While Latin America has experienced significant economic growth, the Mexican crisis on the financial markets in December 1994 had a considerable negative impact on capital flows into the countries of the region and developing countries as a whole. As a result of this crisis, the international community asked the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to consider setting up mechanisms to prevent the recurrence of such a disaster.

The Summit of the Americas, held in Miami in 1994, laid the foundations for the negotiation of a free trade zone covering the entire hemisphere, including the Caribbean. This lowering of barriers to trade and the recent establishment of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) pave the way for improved economic integration in the region. In addition, the positive resolution of the crisis in Haiti should enable that country to take a more active part in the economic life of the region.

The Asia-Pacific region continues to enjoy high levels of economic growth, varying between 8 and 10 per cent, thanks to increases in exports and in domestic demand; as a result, inflationary pressures in the region have grown.

In the Middle East and in the oil-producing countries, the recovery has been slower because of the fall in world oil prices in 1994. An upturn is expected in 1995, as a result of rising oil prices.

In Africa, the overall picture is one of moderate economic growth, despite major disparities in the performances of individual countries. Those which have undertaken difficult economic and financial reforms have enjoyed satisfactory economic growth, which could be improved upon with more public and private investment. The combination of reforms and relatively stable prices on world markets for agricultural produce and raw materials have provided several countries with increased income. Since the devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994 and the measures which accompanied it, the situation of some franc-zone countries has improved. External trade has shown signs of recovery, and the public sector deficit has been reduced. In this new climate, the recession of the previous four years was brought to an end; annual growth rates of 2 to 4 per cent were forecast for the past biennium.

The countries of the French-speaking world are characterized by widely differing levels of development. In 1993, they represented 9 per cent of the world population and 8.8 per cent of the world's gross national product (GNP). Although this figure seems positive, their share of world GNP is only 0.7 per cent if the developed countries (Belgium, Canada, France, Luxembourg, Monaco and Switzerland) are excluded. Out of a total of 47 countries and Governments, the French-speaking world includes 21 least developed countries and 15 middle-income countries, including Romania and Bulgaria, both countries in transition to a market economy (1995 UNDP report).

Outlook

According to World Bank, IMF and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) forecasts, positive developments can be expected in the economies of the French-speaking world. The World Bank forecast in 1994 that Viet Nam and, to a lesser extent, Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic, would benefit from the high annual growth rate in South-East Asia, i.e. more than 5 per cent between 1994 and 2003. The rate for Tunisia and Morocco during the same period is expected to vary between 4 and 5 per cent. Sub-Saharan Africa, with forecast average growth of about 3.9 per cent per year, may see some improvement in its situation. However, growth will be slower in the least developed countries, as a result of the overall decline in personal income there over the past 10 years. The economic outlook for this region should be viewed with caution. Much uncertainty remains, particularly in respect of interest rate levels, the results of the various structural adjustment programmes, the movements of commodity prices and the long-term consequences of the devaluation of the CFA franc. This uncertainty is compounded by unstable climate conditions, which influence agriculture-based economies.

2. International trade

World-wide growth has contributed to an increase in international trade, despite the fact that Africa's share, given that the region's economy is based on commodities, is gradually decreasing. Although deteriorating terms of trade continue to affect a number of economies, the relative stability of the prices of manufactured goods on world markets and the increase in the market prices of certain commodities, such as coffee and cocoa, have had a positive effect in certain developing countries. The signature of the Uruguay Round at Marrakesh in April 1994 and the establishment of the World Trade Organization in January 1995 should provide developing countries with better access to markets in the North. On that basis, and with suitable technical assistance, the developing countries should take the necessary steps to become fully integrated into the world trading system, liberalizing their economies and lowering tariff barriers if need be. Such reforms, while restrictive in the short term, should lead to better use of resources and to growth in the medium and long terms.

According to the Haut Conseil de la Francophonie, the French-speaking countries' share of international trade amounts to 17 per cent of total world exports (601.72 billion United States dollars in 1993). However, the share of the countries of the South and Central and Eastern Europe (Romania and Bulgaria) is only 1.9 per cent. This figure also has to be qualified, since the exports of the great majority of the countries of the South consist of a few agricultural commodities which undergo little processing (coffee, cocoa, timber and so forth).

The diversity of the French-speaking world makes it possible to establish privileged relationships among the various regional groups at a time when the importance of regional integration is growing. Having this advantage, the French-speaking community should extend its cooperation beyond the traditional fields of education and culture into the areas of technology and industry. The French-speaking world must take great care to ensure the participation of its member States, especially those which are developing countries, in the global economy and the international trading system.

3. Cooperation, economic partnership and development

Budget stringency measures have led several donors to reduce their spending on official development assistance. Other, more encouraging trends have been noted, such as the conversion of bilateral lending programmes to grant programmes. There has also been an increase in the volume of resources allocated for emergency humanitarian assistance and a marked decrease in financial flows to developing States, particularly the least developed countries. At the Halifax summit meeting, the countries of the Group of Seven agreed to give priority to Sub-Saharan Africa with a view to reducing extreme poverty. They also decided to increase their efforts to integrate the poorest countries into the world trading system.

In this connection, the international financial institutions and the United Nations development agencies, in particular IMF, the World Bank and the regional development banks, have received urgent requests for assistance. These institutions, which have been studying the matter, need to improve their

performance, coordinate their programmes more effectively and ensure optimum use of their resources to meet the needs of member States.

In several States of the South, economic problems have, unfortunately, been aggravated by internal or border conflicts. Other countries, meanwhile, have been able to improve their development prospects by moving towards democracy and the rule of law, thus stabilizing their societies and reassuring both their own citizens and foreign investors. Tight management of government funds and public administration is the necessary corollary to this progress so that the available resources may be concentrated on meeting the basic needs of the population (education, health, housing). Private- and informal-sector development support, improved tax collection and the establishment of a legal framework which encourages investment are also important strategic factors for sustained and equitable economic growth. Population growth must also be contained.

Globalization of the economy and the development of information and communication technologies have highlighted, more than ever before, the interdependence of countries. The security, including economic security, of one country is increasingly dependent on that of other countries. Accordingly, and in order to pursue the goals of sustainable development, military expenditures must be limited and the resulting funds allocated to activities to promote economic growth and social welfare.

With regard to the environment, at the Cairo Conference on population and the Barbados Conference on small island developing States the international community reiterated the importance of safeguarding the land and marine environment to ensure sustainable resource management and long-term economic development.

The Cairo Conference and the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen have also demonstrated the importance of considering the social dimension in planning economic development assistance programmes.

4. Debt

Since 1994, discussion of the debt problem has intensified and the Group of Seven has encouraged the Paris Club to develop an approach that would make it possible to attack the outstanding debt directly rather than merely reschedule payments. At Naples, the Paris Club adopted the proposals for offering more concessional terms to the poorest and the most highly indebted countries, for which the debt burden remains excessive. These measures constitute a major step forward which has implications for both the level of debt reduction and the way it is handled. They make it possible for the poorest countries to concentrate on economic reforms with a view to achieving sustainable development.

The bilateral approach must be complemented by a multilateral component. The international economic institutions are invited to make better use of existing mechanisms in order to prevent the problem of the multilateral debt of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries from contributing to the problem of bilateral and commercial debt.